



Craigdale
HOUSING ASSOCIATION

INFORMATION AND ADVICE SERVICE POLICY

Date of Approval: June 2026

Date of Next Review: 2029

Craigdale Housing Association can provide this document on request, in different languages and formats, including Braille and audio formats.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 We aim to provide high quality information and advice to everyone using our services. We want to ensure that customers understand their housing rights, responsibilities and options and will provide information, practical assistance and support where appropriate.
- 1.2 We believe that bad advice, however well intentioned, is the worst possible advice therefore it is essential that our staff are supported by access to good information and training.
- 1.3 We recognise that advice must be timely and available when it is needed, not when it is convenient for us to provide it. It is also critical that staff fully understand when and where not to advise, to prevent them from feeling obliged to give advice on a subject they may not be fully conversant with. Staff must have up to date information on other appropriate advice providers and support agencies, and wherever possible have referral arrangements with key agencies.

2.0 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- 2.1 This policy aims to:
 - Comply with the Scottish National Standards for Information and Advice Providers and Good Practice Guidance
 - Ensure that our service is accessible to all client groups
 - Set out the expectations placed on staff in relation to the provision of information and advice
 - Ensure that advisers receive sufficient and appropriate training in order to demonstrate competency

3.0 REGULATION

- 3.1 Section 31 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2010 introduced the Scottish Social Housing Charter which sets the standards and outcomes that all social landlords should aim to achieve when performing their housing activities. This Charter was further reviewed in 2017 and 2022. The Scottish Housing Regulator monitors social landlords' compliance with the outcomes. This Policy will take account of and comply with the relevant outcomes contained within the Social Housing Charter. These are:
 - Outcome 1 - Social landlords perform all aspects of their housing services so that *tenants and other customers have their individual needs recognised, is treated fairly and with respect, and receives fair access to housing and housing services.*

- Outcome 2 - Social landlords manage their businesses so that *tenants and other customers find it easy to communicate with their landlord and get the information they need about their landlord, how and why it makes decisions and the services it provides.*
- Outcome 6 - Social landlords, working in partnership with other agencies, help to ensure as far as reasonably possible that *tenants and other customers live in well-maintained neighbourhoods where they feel safe.*
- Outcome 7, 8 & 9 - Social landlords work together to ensure that *people looking for housing get information that helps them make informed choices and decisions about the range of housing options available to them. Tenants and people on housing lists can review their housing options.*

Social landlords ensure that *people at risk of losing their homes get advice on preventing homelessness.*

- Outcome 10 - Social landlords ensure that *people looking for housing find it easy to apply for the widest choice of social housing available and get the information they need on how the landlord allocates homes and on their prospects of being housed.*
- Outcome 11 - Social landlords ensure that *tenants get the information they need on how to obtain support to remain in their home; and ensure suitable support is available, including services provided directly by the landlord and by other organisations.*
- Outcome 13 - Social landlords manage all aspects of their businesses so that *tenants, owners and other customers receive services that provide continually improving value for the rent and other charges they pay.*
- Outcome 14 & 15 - Social landlords set rents and service charges in consultation with their tenants and other customers so that *a balance is struck between the level of services provided, the cost of the services, and how far current and prospective tenants and service users can afford them. Tenants get clear information on how rent and other money is spent, including details of any individual items of expenditure above thresholds agreed between landlords and tenants.*

The Scottish Housing Regulator has seven Regulatory Standards (2019), which all Scottish registered social landlords must meet. This policy aligns with the following Standards from the SHR's Regulation Framework:

- Standard 1 - The governing body leads and directs the RSL to achieve good outcomes for its tenants and other service users.
- Standard 2 - The RSL is open about and accountable for what it does. It understands and takes account of the needs and priorities of its tenants, service users and stakeholders. And its primary focus is the sustainable achievement of these priorities.
- Standard 3 - The RSL manages its resources to ensure its financial well-being and economic effectiveness.
- Standard 5 – The RSL conducts its affairs with honesty and integrity.

- Standard 6 - The governing body and senior officers have the skills and knowledge they need to be effective.

4.0 PRINCIPLE AND STRUCTURE OF HOUSING ADVICE PROVISION

- 4.1 The Scottish National Standards for Information and Advice Providers is a quality assurance framework for agencies involved in the provision of information and advice and incorporates performance indicators, competences for advisers and good practice guidance.
- 4.2 Where information is requested, staff will advise in accordance with the Staff Competency Table attached at Appendix 1, and provide details of other potential advisors, or make a referral, as detailed in the Staff Competency Table.
- 4.3 We will inform our customers about our own services in a variety of ways, including, but not limited to:
 - A range of service and policy related leaflets
 - All our policies available on our website
 - Quarterly newsletter given to all tenants and members
 - Via our website www.craigdaleha.co.uk
 - Formal / informal tenant group meetings
 - Information and promotional events in the community
 - Comprehensive information for new tenants on the commencement of the tenancy

Our Tenant Participation Strategy sets out the ways that our tenants can become involved in our work.

5.0 ACCESS TO INFORMATION AND ADVICE

- 5.1 Housing advice and information is available through our office, via our website or, where a request is reasonable, through home visits from staff.
- 5.2 Because of the wide variety of information we publish or may have enquiries about, it is not practical to provide copies of all our documents in alternate formats such as large print, audio cassette / CD or foreign languages. However, where the need arises, we will endeavour to provide information in whatever format is necessary. We currently:
 - Provide documents in large type
 - Have access to translation services

On our websites, we:

- Subscribe to Browsealoud for those who are visually impaired or have literacy problems

- 5.3 We aim to deal with all requests for advice at the point of contact. If the advice required is not within the competency of the staff member dealing with the customer, they will try to get a suitably trained staff member to deal with the request. If no-one is available, the customer will be offered the option of making an appointment to come back when a suitably qualified staff member is available. Where the required advice falls out-with our overall competency we will try to signpost an appropriate agency for the customer.

6.0 SERVICE STANDARDS

- 6.1 Our Customer Service Standards detail the level of service that customers can expect when they contact the Association with a service query or request. Our aim will be to achieve high levels of customer care on a consistent basis whilst also recognising the individual needs and preferences that customers have.

7.0 RESOURCES & TRAINING

- 7.1 We recognise that effective information and advice provision cannot take place without a commitment of resources, both financial and human. We make provision in our budgets and in our staffing resources for publicity, promotional activities, tenant involvement and staff training.
- 7.2 We review staff training requirements annually, as part of the Appraisal Process and plan for appropriate training.

8.0 MONITORING SATISFACTION

- 8.1 We carry out a range of surveys to measure satisfaction with the information and advice provided to tenants and other customers and will continually review these.
- 8.2 We will monitor complaints to ensure that all learning points are known and acted upon to improve our advice and information provision.
- 8.3 We will ensure that passive information (as a minimum) is available to customers, and the range of advice leaflets and other material that we produce will aim to encourage feedback about the service provided.
- 8.4

9.0 MONITORING OF SERVICE

- 9.1 The Board and Senior Management Team are responsible for monitoring our Information and Advice Service. To do this effectively, the Committee will be provided with:
- reports on service use and activity at each Board meeting
 - An Annual Service Review; looking at the work; i.e. service delivery and administrative systems for the past year

10.0 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

- 10.1 Craigdale HA will act in a manner that encourages equal opportunities and complies with all relevant equal opportunities requirements. The Association's Equalities Policy provides further information on these and the Association's approach to equalities issues.

11. Tenant Participation

11.1 We are a tenant focussed organisation and as such we are committed to involving tenants in all aspects of our work and ensuring that tenants are included, informed, and consulted about decisions that have an impact on the way their homes are managed.

11.2 As part of this commitment we will involve our tenants in the development of our policies and seek feedback where appropriate. We will ensure that any significant changes to this Policy and other Policies which will affect our tenants will be the subject of consultation.

12. Risk Management

12.1 In all the key areas of our business we need to consider any risks which may arise. To this end we have in place a robust Risk Management Policy and from this flows our Risk Register. We have identified our material risks which are regularly monitored by our Management Team and Audit & Assurance Committee.

12.2 To ensure we continue to manage risks we will periodically review this Policy to ensure compliance with all legislative requirements and regulatory and best practice guidance.

13. Complaints Procedure

13.1 We aim to get things right first time and provide a good quality service to our tenants and other customers. However, we acknowledge that things can go wrong and that some tenants or other customers may be unhappy with the service provided.

13.2 We promote our Complaints procedure through our website and periodic articles in our newsletters. This information leaflet is also issued to all new tenants as part of the signing up pack.

13.3 We are required to report specifically to both our Board and the Scottish Housing Regulator on any complaints concerning equalities issues.

14. Data Protection

14.1 On the 25th May 2018 the legislation governing data protection changed with the introduction of the UK General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

14.2 We hold a variety of Personal Data relating to individuals including tenants, waiting list applicants, factored owners, other service users, employees, and Board. Our Privacy Policy sets out the basis on which we can process and share such data with third parties, it also sets out how we will securely store individuals' data, whether electronically or in paper format. It also provides information on individuals' rights under GDPR including: to view personal data held about them by us; to request a restriction of processing of their data; the right to be forgotten and a right to object to us processing their data. In terms of the rights to be forgotten and to restrict or object to processing of Personal Data, any such requests will require to be considered on their own merits and legal advice will need to be obtained in some circumstances. We have the responsibility for accepting or refusing such requests and will do so in writing.

14.3 Under GDPR we are required to provide all customers whose Personal Data we hold with a Fair Processing Notice (also known as a Privacy Notice). The Notice sets out the Personal Data we process and the basis for doing so.

14.4 We will only keep and process Personal Data for the original purpose we gathered it for, and we will not keep it for any longer than necessary. Attached to our Privacy Policy is a table of Retention Periods for Personal Data held and processed by us. We recognise that not all Personal Data can be processed and kept for the same period of time, and this will vary depending on the individual circumstances of each person whose Personal Data we hold.

14.5 The Privacy Policy sets out what should happen in the event of a Data breach e.g., does the breach require reporting to the Information Commissioner's Office and whether the individual affected should be notified. Timescales are set out for dealing with data breaches.

14.6 Full copies of our Privacy Policy are available upon request at our office or from our website www.craigdaleha.co.uk

15. Policy Review

15.1 This Policy will be reviewed at least every three years or sooner to ensure it continues to reflect current thinking and practice and to comply with legislative requirements and regulatory guidance.

APPENDIX 1

Staff Competency Table for Housing Information and Advice

This table is for staff to use and is designed to give guidance on how to respond to enquiries. It details the areas of housing law where they can give advice and also when they should signpost or refer the customer to a more appropriate agency.

It is also a guide to be used by staff and their line managers to assess any skills shortfall and consequent training requirement.

Please note: Our reception staff are usually the first point of contact within the Association. Where they do not have the required competency, they will facilitate an appointment, interview or telephone call with a member of staff who does, wherever possible, on the same working day and/or provide the customer with passive information, such as a leaflet (if one is available), and a copy of the appropriate information or contact sheets.

Area of Law	Staff Member	Required Competency
Security of Tenure	Senior Housing Officer Housing Officer Housing Assistant	Knowledge of all tenancies in common use, and advice on rights of tenant in repossession action. Offer referral to Glasgow City Council where homelessness may arise. Advise on support agencies and legal advisors in all other situations.
Housing Benefit or Universal Credit	Senior Housing Officer Housing Officer Welfare Rights Officer	To understand the principles of Housing Benefit and Universal Credit, be able to read and understand a determination letter, and to advise how to make a claim. No advice should be given on the likely success (or otherwise) of any claim, or in response to any detailed or technical request. The claimant should be directed to the local Housing Benefit Office in these circumstances. The client should always be advised of their responsibility to ensure their Housing Benefit or Universal Credit claim is correct, and of their entitlement to appeal if they feel a determination to be incorrect.
Housing Benefit (continued)	Housing Officer	As above but may include assistance with completing an application form and advice on applying for back dates / 2 homes payments.
Discrimination in housing	All Staff Members	To understand and comply with the Association's Equalities and Diversity Policy. To understand how discrimination may occur. In terms of a complaint or allegation, if it is about the Association, the customer should be encouraged to use our Complaints Policy, but if not, advised of support agencies or legal advisors.
Disrepair (CHA)	Housing Officer Housing Assistant Corporate Assistant	To be aware of our policies and responsibilities as a Landlord, and to arrange such work as is necessary. In

Area of Law	Staff Member	Required Competency
		terms of any other landlord, not to advise, but to advise of agencies that can help.
Disrepair (Other Landlords)	Housing Officer Housing Assistant Corporate Assistant	As above, to be aware of issues, but not to advise, but to advise of agencies that can help.
Harassment and Illegal Eviction	Senior Housing Officer Housing Officer	Understanding of the different types of tenancy and the definitions of harassment and illegal eviction. General advice about the rights of tenants in such circumstances. Advice about relevant support agencies and legal advisors should be given, except in the case of a homelessness situation, where a direct referral to Glasgow City Council should be offered.
Homelessness – Priority Need	Housing Officer Housing Assistant Corporate Assistant	Basic understanding of the definitions of homelessness, priority need, intentionality and local connection and the changes coming through in the lead up to 2012. Provide details of other support agencies.
	Housing Officer	Ability to refer cases directly to Glasgow City Council and to explain arrangements for temporary accommodation.
Mobility and Transfer	Housing Officer Housing Assistant	To have full knowledge of the Association's allocation and transfer policy.
Housing Options: General	Housing Officer Housing Assistant Corporate Assistant	Awareness of different types of tenure and of tenancies used. Arguments for/against owner occupation. Provide contact information about Glasgow City Council's Housing Options advice, local providers, and estate agents only.
Housing Options: Private Rented and Owner Occupation	Housing Officer Housing Assistant Corporate Assistant	Awareness of different types of tenure and tenancies used by private landlords. Provide contact information about local providers and estate agents only.
Relationship Breakdown	Senior Housing Officer Housing Officer	For the Association's tenants to advise on occupancy rights, our Allocations Policy and to offer referral to Glasgow City Council where homelessness is arising. In addition, to advise of support agencies and legal advisors. In the case of non tenants, to offer referral to Glasgow City Council where homelessness is arising, and in addition, to advise of support agencies and legal advisors.

Area of Law	Staff Member	Required Competency
Rent: Private Sector	Housing Officer Housing Assistant Corporate Assistant	To advise of relevant agencies who can advise and where to look for private rented accommodation.
Rent Arrears	Senior Housing Officer Housing Officer	For current tenants, a full understanding of the Association's arrears recovery policy and ability to advise appropriately. Understanding of causes, and solutions other than legal action. Offer referral to Welfare Benefits Service. Provide advice on other support agencies. As a matter of practice, once legal action has commenced, offer advice on support services and legal advisors only. For non-tenants, advise of support agencies and legal advisors only.